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RUEHBJ/AMEMBASSY BEIJING 7306
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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 NEW DELHI 000046

SENSITIVE
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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PTER](#) [PREL](#) [PINR](#) [KDEM](#) [IN](#)
SUBJECT: CHIEF MINISTERS PLEDGE TO COMBAT TERROR

REF: A. NEW DELHI 00017
[1](#)B. 2008 NEW DELHI 02556

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Classified By: Acting Political Counselor Les Viguerie for Reasons 1.4
(B and D)

[1](#)1. (C) SUMMARY: While Prime Minister Singh's charge at a January 6 meeting that Pakistan was complicit in the Mumbai attacks garnered most of the headlines, the Chief Ministers meeting was also an important first step in launching the new National Investigation Agency (NIA). Following passage of key counter-terrorism legislation in the post-Mumbai Parliament session, Union Home Minister P. Chidambaram chaired a meeting with Chief Ministers and Director Generals of Police from around the country on January 6. Chidambaram suggested several measures to strengthen state governments' capacity to combat terror, including: enhanced state preparedness to handle sophisticated terror attacks; creation of 24-hour control rooms to improve collection and dissemination of terror-related intelligence; and infusion of additional resources into state police and intelligence units. BJP CMs raised concerns about the shifting balance between national and state responsibilities and called for tougher laws. Responding to public demands for improved national security, we expect GOI to announce additional anti-terror initiatives as the ruling United Progressive Alliance (UPA) government seeks to further demonstrate its terror-fighting credentials.

States Play Key Terror-fighting Role

[1](#)2. (SBU) The January 6 gathering was the first meeting of the Home Ministry with state governments since Parliament gave the go-ahead for the proposed National Investigation Agency (NIA), a new federal security agency, in December [1](#)2008. Under India's Constitution, law enforcement is generally considered a state responsibility, but the NIA has been empowered to take up investigations of crimes impacting national security, as well as act on directions from the Center.

PM Singh Makes Headlines

13. (SBU) Speaking one day after the GOI handed Pakistan a dossier of evidence charging Pakistani involvement in the Mumbai attacks (Ref. A), PM Singh opened up the Union Ministry meeting with a sharply worded keynote address on January 6. The PM charged that Lashkar-e-Taiba (LeT) operatives must have received "some form" of support from the Pakistan government in carrying out attacks. He further accused Pakistan of "whipping up war hysteria." After weeks of avoiding any assertion of official involvement and referring to the involvement of Pakistani "elements" this was the explicit accusation of Pakistani complicity.

National-State Coordination

14. (U) However, the bulk of the Prime Minister's speech focused on improving coordination between the national and state governments in fighting terrorism. Through the course of the day-long meeting, Home Minister P. Chidambaram presented a detailed internal security plan to enhance state-federal government anti-terror mechanisms, which received qualified support from all state government representatives present. In Chidambaram's view, a key component to allow the smooth functioning of the NIA is the smooth transmission of information from state governments on issues of national importance, such as: the circulation of fake currency, cross-border terrorist infiltration, and illegal arms and drug trafficking.

Home Ministry Sets Goals to Enhance Anti-terror Coordination

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15. (U) Chidambaram suggested several measures to improve state-level intelligence collection and dissemination: the creation of 24-hour control rooms to facilitate information-sharing with federal agencies and other state counterparts; and the development of "Analysis Groups," highly-skilled intelligence analysts to liaison with state and federal law enforcement and intelligence units.

16. (U) He also called on state governments to dedicate additional funding to state police. Local police forces are the "best source" of intelligence; however, Chidambaram lamented that police departments are often neglected and understaffed. Chidambaram encouraged states to fill long-standing law enforcement vacancies nation-wide, including: 113,779 constables, 18,654 inspectors and 2,099 deputy superintendents.

BJP: New Terror Laws Lack Bite

17. (SBU) Chief Ministers from the opposition Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP)-ruled and allied states charged that the UPA's anti-terror laws lacked bite and would do little to deter the terrorist threat. Led by Gujarat CM Narendra Modi, pro-BJP CMs called on the UPA to enact tougher anti-terror law similar to the Prevention of Terrorism Act (POTA), which the former BJP-led central government enacted in 2001 and repealed by the UPA in 2004 (Ref. B). Modi accused the UPA of "making a mockery" of the legislative system and repeated the "soft on terror" charge. In their view, a POTA-like law could have prevented Mumbai and other terror attacks and should have been re-enacted years ago.

18. (SBU) BJP CMs also expressed concerns about the NIA, noting that the agency should be limited to fighting terrorism and not extend its activities to cover other criminal offences currently handled by state law enforcement. Chidambaram noted that the agency received "unanimous support" from Parliament last month, representing the consensus of all states and political parties. Just as he

had assured Parliament, both Singh and Chidambaram reminded CMs that the NIA and other anti-terror laws can be revisited during the February parliamentary session.

Comment: UPA Hanging Tough on Terror

19. (C) The UPA government's inability to tackle terrorism has been a constant theme for the opposition BJP since 2004. However, the passage of the National Investigation Agency (NIA) by Parliament, and crushing state elections defeats in Rajasthan and Delhi in December 2008, have undercut the BJP's "soft on terror" charge. In the run up to national elections due by May this year, the UPA's anti-terrorism stance, and its ability to stay ahead of the opposition, will be watched closely. End Comment.
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